

Determinants of Brand Image and their Impacts on Purchase Intention of Grab

* Thoo Ai Chin

Nur Ain Nasyazwanie Salimi

Zuraidah Sulaiman

Faculty of Management, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia

Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Email: acthoo@utm.my, ainnasyazwanie@gmail.com, zuraidahs@utm.my*

Lee Yoke Lai

Faculty of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia

Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Email: lylai@utm.my

Huam Hon Tat

Faculty of Business & Management, Southern University College, Malaysia

Johor Bahru, Malaysia. Email: hthuam@sc.edu.my

Abstract

Today, Grab is the leader of ride-hailing platform and most of the drivers and passengers in Southeast Asia prefer to use Grab application. Therefore, this study aims to explore the impacts of electronic referral (e-Referral) and electronic word-of-mouth communication (e-WOM) on Grab brand image, as well as the effect of e-Referral, e-WOM and brand image on purchase intention of GrabCar. A sample of 95 respondents was selected for the data collection using convenience sampling technique. Questionnaire is the main instrument for data gathering and the data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The results show that e-Referral and e-WOM are positively related to Grab brand image. E-WOM is the strongest predictor for Grab brand image. In addition, brand image has a significant and positive relationship with purchase intention. The findings of the study are significant to Grab to develop marketing strategies in order to attract more customers to use its digital platform for car sharing service. Also, the marketer of Grab should focus on e-WOM and e-Referral to increase its brand image and to position Grab brand in consumer's mind as a good quality and reliable service.

Key words: Electronic Referral (e-Referral), Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM), Brand Image, Purchase Intention, Grab Car

* Corresponding author

Introduction

The growth of mobile technology and applications are increasingly popular, causing many companies use the opportunity to develop relationships with consumers through mobile applications (Zhang, 2017). Grab is the taxi booking mobile application that founded in 2012 by Anthony Tan and Tan Hooi Ling (Ackaradejruangsri, 2015). GrabCar service is popular throughout the world and is available in several countries including Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Philippines. Grab provides the insurance coverage includes death, permanent dismemberment and bodily injuries sustained in an accident for both driver and passenger.

Today, Grab is the leader of ride-hailing platform and most of the drivers and passengers in Southeast Asia prefer to use Grab application. Grab has accumulated up to 2.5 million rides daily and has been downloaded onto over 45 million devices in 55 cities across Southeast Asia (Grab Press Centre, 2017). In Malaysia, Grab was launched in 2012 as a third-party taxi e-hailing mobile application (Lin and Dula, 2016). A survey done by The Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD)

found that 80 percent of the public prefer using Uber and GrabCar services due to accessibility (New Straits Times, 2017). In fact, Grab was established as MyTeksi in Kuala Lumpur in 2011 and rebranded as Grab Taxi outside of Malaysia. Grab aims to solve Malaysia's taxi system issues such as non-compliance with rates, safety concern, poor service and intimidation of passengers (Lin and Dula, 2016).

In Malaysia, there are two major car-sharing providers: Uber and GrabCar that preferred by Malaysians (New Straits Times, 2017). GrabCar's sharing service is available in several places such as Seremban, Ipoh, Kuantan, Kuching, Johor, Kuala Lumpur, Penang and others. Uber is Grab's main rival and it can be found in more than 60 countries. On the other hand, Grab is a part of the sharing economy and highly dependent on hyper-local, social and mobile technology. Therefore, the competition intensifies when riders and drivers can effortlessly switch between mobile ridesharing applications. Also, the new applications can be downloaded easily by end-users, which in turn, reduce the customer switching costs and brand loyalty (Lin and Dula, 2016). As such, Grab needs to keep continuing to innovate its business to gain customers (Grab Press Centre, 2017) and increase the passengers' intention for GrabCar.

The term 'sharing-economy' was introduced around since the early 2000s, however, the term started to gain popularity in 2007-08. There are five major industries in sharing economy: online staffing, peer-to-peer lending and crowdfunding, peer-to-peer accommodation, car sharing, and music and video streaming (Lin and Dula, 2016). Studies about sharing economy in Malaysia are very limited, particularly for GrabCar. Examples of studies in Malaysia include car sharing of Uber (Hawapi et al., 2017) and peer-to-peer accommodation (Razli et al., 2017a; Razli et al., 2017b). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors that motivate passengers' intention in Malaysia to use GrabCar.

Literature Review

Purchase Intention

Kazmi and Mehmood (2016) highlighted that purchase intention is an important component in consumer buying behaviour because it influences the consumers to make choices among different alternatives in market based on their preferences. If the purchasing intention is high, there will be a high chance for customers to buy products or services. However, the purchase intention depends on various factors such as customer's readiness and interest to the product or service, social pressures from others and a general sense of what is perceived by the customers (Vahdati and Nejad, 2016). In this study, purchase intention is measured in terms of consumers' intention to use and recommend GrabCar rather than any other brands available in the future (Abubakar, Ilkan and Sahin, 2016).

Electronic Referral (e-Referral)

Electronic referrals or e-Referral is known as affiliate marketing and e-Referral occurs among individuals who have strong social relationships such as friends, family and the surrounding community (Abubakar et al., 2016). Customers who have used the product or service would refer their experience to others. In support, Referral Marketing Statistic by Nielsen (2017) found that 92% of consumers trust a referral from people they know. Also, consumers are almost 4 times more likely to buy a product or service when the product or service is referred by a friend (Nielsen, 2017). Therefore, companies should educate customers about referral programs and the value of sharing the product or service to their friends. For an example, Grab Malaysia just implemented a referral campaign for customers to refer a Grab driver, and then they will receive RM5 off with 10 Grab rides (Grab Malaysia, 2017). According to Lautiainen (2015), customer make decisions referred by family, close friends, neighbours, work group or other people that consumers associate with. Steffes and Burgee (2009) found that information obtained from strong social relationships is more influential than a weak social relationship. In fact, social influences are positively associated with brand image (Abubakar et al., 2016). According to Daugherty and Hoffman (2014), negative or positive e-Referral reviews affect the brand image of a product or service. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed for the study:

H1: Electronic referral has a positive and significant relationship with brand image.

As stated by Abubakar et al. (2016), e-referral will be more effective if the receivers obtain the sources from known and trusted people that could stimulate their purchase intention. Also, Lautiainen (2015) found that every individual needs someone around to make buying decisions such as family, close friends, neighbours, work group or other. Based on a report from Nielsen (2017), when consumers are referred by a friend for a purchase, they are almost 4 times more likely to buy a product or service. As such, the study proposes a hypothesis as follows:

H2: Electronic referral has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention.

Electronic Word-of-Mouth (e-WOM)

E-WOM is defined as a way of communication that provides information to consumers about the sellers, and usage of products and services through Internet-based technologies (Torlak, 2014). Also, consumers have opportunity to make reviews for potential consumers by sharing their opinions through blogs, micro-blogs, chat boards, chat rooms and social network websites (Panjakajornsak, 2014). Users in social media such as Facebook could reach and get the information about the product or service easily. However, the credibility and trust of information is a major issue in online environments (Cheung and Thadani, 2010). E-WOM is also associated with viral marketing and it can spread through different channels such as e-mails, discussion forums, instant messaging, mobile short messaging services, news groups, and social networking sites (Sharma, 2012). Kazmi and Mehmood (2016) stated that when a customer is satisfied with the products or services, he or she encourages E-WOM to happen where it can help others to choose the better products or service as well.

According to Kazmi and Mehmood (2016), to keep customers in the long run, firms should meet the needs of existing customers in order to reduce costs of attracting potential customers. This means existing customers' review is directly affecting a brand image of a firm. Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) investigated the effect of e-WOM on brand image in automobile industry in Iran. The study found that e-WOM has a positive influence on brand image. Similarly, Abubakar et al. (2016) found that e-WOM is positively related to brand image. Based on the above empirical evidence, a hypothesis is postulated as follows:

H3: Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive and significant relationship with brand image.

As stated by Bataineh (2015), purchase intention is one of the most common effects from e-WOM communication. Customer's favourable or unfavourable attitudes depend heavily on online customer reviews. Purchase intention is influenced by the feedback reviews from other consumers (Abubakar et al., 2016). Also, Khan et al. (2016) stated that 84% of consumers in American make a decision to buy a product or service based on online reviews. Customer's recommendations are positively associated with purchase intentions (Bataineh, 2015) Similarly, online reviews and feedback are important in the purchase process as customers are motivated by the type of activity in purchasing a product or making a choice of products or services (Kazmi and Mehmood, 2016). In fact, positive or negative e-WOM about product or service has a big influence on purchase intention (East, Hammond and Lomax, 2008). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention.

Brand Image

According to Kazmi and Mehmood (2016), brand image could contribute to a company's success when customers are willing to purchase products or services at a higher price. In fact, brand image is important for companies' future benefits such as long-term cash flow, decisions making, stock cost, sustainable competitive advantage and achievement in market (Torlak, 2014). Brand value

is about the value and the satisfactions that make customers get attracted to use a particular brand. It contains emotions or attitude about the brand and quality (Lin, Wu and Chen, 2013).

Ackaradejruangsri (2015) found that many consumers prefer using GrabCar due to its easy to access and never rejecting passengers. Grab application uses global positioning systems to identify drivers who are nearest and shortest directions distance to the customer's location on time. This technology can increase customer satisfaction and retain the existing customers (Charoen, 2015). Grab has higher quality and brand image if compared to other competitors due to its strict regulations on Grab drivers (Ackaradejruangsri, 2015).

According Abubakar et al. (2016), brand is the identity that recognizes the product, service and company. Brand images deliver certain features or functions that explain the advantages of using a product or service (Lin et al., 2013). Furthermore, there are many previous research found that brand image is positively related to purchase intention (Charo et al., 2015). Also, Yoo and Donthu (2001) stated that brand image affects the company's profits due to high brand image of a product or service could drive customers to purchase products or services even at higher prices. Also, Jalilvand and Samiei (2012) and Lin et al. (2013) found that brand image influences purchase intention significantly. Based on the discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed for the study:

H5: Brand image has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention.

Research Framework

Figure 1 depicts the impacts of e-Referral and e-WOM on brand image and purchase intention, as well as the relationship between brand image and purchase intention for GrabCar.

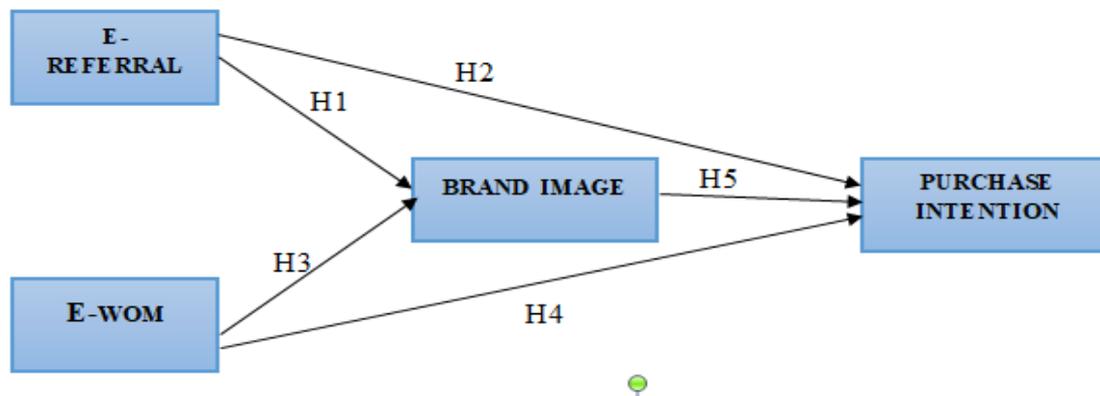


Figure 1: Research Framework

Data Collection and Sampling

The study used cross sectional method. Data were collected from respondents through Google form. Non-probability sampling technique using convenience sampling was used for data collection. The acceptable size for a study to investigate a relationship using regression or correlation statistical analysis is as minimum as 50 (Green, 1991). However, the sample size for this study involved 95 respondents through questionnaire.

Results of the Study

Profile of Respondents

The data of respondents are shown in Table 1. The number of respondents (N) who participated in this study is 95. Out of the 95 respondents, 26 of them were male (27.37%) and 69 of the respondents were female (72.63%). The majority of the respondents for this study were aged 21 to 30 years old (77.89%), followed by age 20 years old and below (14.74%) and between 31 to 40 years old (7.37%). Most of the respondents had a Bachelor's degree (70.53%), followed by Diploma (15.79%), master's degree (4.21%), PhD/DBA (2.10%) and others (7.37%). Moreover, 32 out of the 95 respondents (33.68%) were unemployed and fell under category of others. Most of the respondents who earned RM1000 and below (67.37%). Clearly, all of the respondents had experience using GrabCar and most of them used 1 to 5 times GrabCar in the past 3 months.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Profile of Respondents		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	26	27.37
	Female	69	72.63
Age	20 years and below	14	14.74
	21-30 years	74	77.89
	31-40 years	7	7.37
	41-50 years	0	0
	Above 51 years	0	0
Educational level	Diploma	15	15.79
	Bachelor's Degree	67	70.53
	Master's Degree	4	4.21
	PhD/DBA	2	2.10
	Others	7	7.37
Occupation	Government	6	6.32
	Private	21	22.11
	Self-employed	4	4.21
	Unemployed	32	33.68
	Others	32	33.68
Income Level	RM1000 and below	64	67.37
	RM1001 to RM2000	10	10.53
	RM2001 to RM3000	10	10.53
	RM3001 to RM4000	5	5.26
	RM4001 to RM5000	2	2.11
	RM5001 and above	4	4.21
Experience using Grab car	Yes	95	100
	No	0	0
Frequency using Grab Car in the past 3 months	1 – 5 times	59	62.11
	6 – 10 times	25	26.32
	11 – 15 times	4	4.21
	More than 15 times	7	7.37

Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 shows the mean score of the variables. Purchase intention had the highest mean value of 3.7825 and standard deviation of 0.92989. E-WOM is the second highest mean score of 3.7667 and standard deviation of 0.86616, followed by e-Referral with mean score of 3.6342 and standard

deviation of 0.81607. However, the lowest mean score belongs to brand image with mean value of 3.6211 and standard deviation of 0.75430.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Construct

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Quantity of items
Electronic Referral	95	3.6342	0.81607	4
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	95	3.7667	0.86616	6
Brand Image	95	3.6211	0.75430	4
Purchase Intention	95	3.7825	0.92989	3

Normality Test

Normality test is used to measure the normality of a dataset through skewness and kurtosis. Based on the rule of thumb stated by *Hair et al. (2007)*, the skewness must be range from +1 to -1 and kurtosis should range from +3 to -3. As shown in Table 3, all variables are considered normally distributed since all the values fell within the required range.

Table 3: Values of Skewness and Kurtosis

Variables	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Electronic Referral	95	-0.791	0.247	1.203	0.490
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	95	-1.000	0.247	1.090	0.490
Brand Image	95	-1.019	0.247	2.465	0.490
Purchase Intention	95	-0.932	0.247	0.989	0.490

Reliability Analysis

According to Mohsen Tavakol (2011), the acceptable value of Cronbach's Alpha should be greater than 0.7. Table 4 shows that value of Cronbach's Alpha for all variables are greater than 0.7, thus all the variables used in the study are consistent and reliable.

Table 4: Reliability Coefficient for Variables

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Electronic Referral	4	0.783
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	6	0.920
Brand Image	4	0.868
Purchase Intention	3	0.917

Multicollinearity Analysis

Multicollinearity analysis was tested before multiple regression analysis. Multicollinearity problems exist when variable's tolerance value is less than 0.5 and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) value is greater than 5. As indicated in Table 5 and Table 6, the values of VIF for all the variables are less than 5.0 and the tolerance value is less than 0.5. Therefore, there is no multicollinearity issue arise in this study.

Table 5: Multicollinearity Statistic (Dependent variable: Brand image)

Variables	Tolerance Value	VIF
Electronic Referral	.446	2.242
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	.354	2.821

Table 6: Multicollinearity Statistic (Dependent variable: Purchase Intention)

Variables	Tolerance Value	VIF
Electronic Referral	.446	2.242
Electronic Word-of-Mouth	.354	2.821
Brand Image	.434	2.307

Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple regression was used to test the research hypotheses and to explore the strength of relationships between independent variables (electronic referral and e-WOM) and dependent variables which is brand image as illustrated in Table 7. Also, the test was used to examine the relationships between independent variables (e-Referral, e-WOM and brand image) and dependent variables which is purchase intention as indicated in Table 8.

Table 7: Multiple Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: Brand Image)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.975	0.251		3.887	0.000
	ER	0.225	0.092	0.244	2.447	0.016
	EWM	0.485	0.087	0.557	5.594	0.000

As shown in Table 7, e-Referral and e-WOM have a significant and positive relationship with brand image of Grab with p value less than 0.05. E-WOM had the highest beta value of 0.557, followed by e-Referral (0.244). Table 9 shows the adjusted R² is 0.557 which means that 55.7% represents the proportion of variation in the brand image of Grab which is explained by e-Referral and e-WOM.

Table 8: Multiple Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention)

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	0.339	0.318		1.064	0.290
	ER	0.005	0.112	0.004	0.041	0.967
	EWM	-0.060	0.118	-0.055	-0.504	0.615
	BI	1.008	0.123	0.818	8.221	0.000

Table 8 shows that brand image has a significant and positive relationship with purchase intention of GrabCar with p value less than 0.05. However, e-Referral and e-WOM have no impact on purchase intention of Grab. Table 10 shows the adjusted R² is 0.597 which means that 59.7% represents the proportion of variation in the purchase intention of GrabCar is explained by brand image.

Table 9: Model Summary of Multiple Regression (Dependent Variable: Brand Image)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.753 ^a	0.566	0.557	.50201

Table 10: Model Summary of Multiple Regression (Dependent Variable: Purchase Intention)

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.781 ^a	0.609	0.597	.59059

Table 11: Result of Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Result
H ₁ : Electronic referral has a positive and significant relationship with brand image	Supported
H ₂ : Electronic referral has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention.	Not Supported
H ₃ : Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive and significant relationship with brand image.	Supported
H ₄ : Electronic word-of-mouth has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention	Not Supported
H ₅ : Brand image has a positive and significant relationship with purchase intention.	Supported

Table 11 shows the result of hypotheses testing for the study. Three hypotheses are supported (H₁, H₃, H₅) and other two hypotheses are not supported (H₂, H₄).

Discussions

Based on the findings presented in Table 11, the first hypothesis (H1) is supported. E-Referral was found to have a positive and significant relationship with brand image of GrabCar. The finding confirms the results of the previous studies by Abubakar et al. (2016) and Daugherty and Hoffman (2014). This indicates that customers in Malaysia refer their friends, colleagues, family, trusted firms and social network sites to perceive high quality products and rich history brands. Grab is a ride-hailing platform and consumers need referral from someone they trust to identify the reliability of the car sharing service. However, this study found that e-Referral has no relationship with purchase intention of GrabCar. Thus, the H2 is not supported. The study obtains dissimilar results of Abubakar et al. (2016). Most of the respondents aged below 40 years old and earned less than RM1000. The fare of the ride sharing service is reasonable and affordable; therefore the respondents might not need the e-referral for purchasing the GrabCar service.

The third hypothesis (H3) shows that e-WOM has a significant and positive relationship with brand image. This means Grab customers read other consumers' online comments and reviews to gain more knowledge about the brand's quality, history and performance in order to reduce the risk in purchase decisions. The finding of this study is in line with previous studies (Jalilvand and Samiei, 2012; Abubakar et al., 2016). Thus, the H3 is supported.

In contrast to previous studies (Sa'ait, 2016; East, Hammond and Lomax, 2008), e-WOM has no influence on purchase intention of GrabCar. This means customers do not refer to online reviews when have intention to use GrabCar. Further investigations are needed as the sample size of the study is limited. Hence, hypothesis (H4) is not supported. Lastly, H5 is supported which means brand image influences purchase intention of GrabCar. Previous studies of Yoo and Donthu (2001), Jalilvand and Samiei (2012), Lin et al. (2013) and Abubakar et al. (2016) found the similar findings. As a result, high brand image of Grab triggers higher purchase intention of GrabCar.

Research Implications

Based on the research findings, brand image is the important factor that motivates GrabCar consumers to have purchase intention. Also, e-Referral and e-WOM are found to be the essential factors for GrabCar brand image. Through the findings, e-WOM is the strongest predictor for Grab brand image. The findings of the study are significant to Grab to develop marketing strategies in order to attract more customers to use its digital platform for car sharing service. The marketer of Grab should focus on e-WOM and e-Referral to increase its brand image and to position Grab brand in consumer's mind as a good quality and reliable service. As such, the brand image and purchase intention can be enhanced for passengers to use GrabCar as their convenient transport option and preferred application. Also, this study is useful for researchers about sharing economy in car sharing in Malaysia from customer or passenger perspective. The findings of the study enrich the existing literature about collaborative consumption.

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